

Sample article for organizations and employers to use to reach customers

Customize and provide the following article in your communication vehicles about choosing a tax preparer

How to select a tax preparer and FREE tax help options

Do you –

- Use the same preparer you always have?
- Look in the Yellow Pages for someone close to home or with a large ad?
- Ask your friends and neighbors for suggestions?
- Use an online tax preparer?

All are valid options – however, if you pay someone to prepare your income tax return, the IRS urges you to choose wisely. As a taxpayer, you are legally responsible for everything reported on your tax return; whether you prepare it yourself or have someone else prepare it for you.

Below are some helpful tips in selecting an individual or company to prepare your taxes. While the majority of tax preparers are knowledgeable, honest and professional, there are always some who, as the saying goes, “give everyone else a bad name.”

- Check the person or company’s qualifications
- Check the preparer’s history
- Ask about their service fees
- Make sure they are accessible after the April due date in case you have a question about your return

The preparer you choose should:

- Ask you to provide all receipts and records needed to prepare your return
- Never ask you to sign a blank return
- Have you review the entire return before you sign it
- Sign the return and include their preparer tax identification number

Where can I go for FREE tax preparation?

- [Free tax return preparation by IRS certified volunteers](#). The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program or VITA offers free tax preparation for low- to moderate-income individuals (generally, \$50,000 and below). Most locations also offer free electronic filing. **To locate the nearest VITA site, check IRS.gov, or call 1-800-906-9887 beginning in early January.**
- [Tax Counseling for the Elderly](#). The TCE program provides free tax help for people aged 60 and older. As part of the IRS-sponsored TCE Program, **AARP** also offers the Tax-Aide counseling program at more than 7,000 sites nationwide during the filing season. For more information on TCE, call 1-800-906-9887. To locate the nearest AARP Tax-Aide site, call 1-888-227-7669 or visit [AARP's website](#).
- [Free tax help for military personnel and their families](#) - The Armed Forces Tax Council consists of the tax program coordinators for the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and

Coast Guard. Active duty members and their families worldwide receive free tax preparation assistance at offices within their installations. These VITA sites provide free tax advice, tax preparation, and assistance to military members and their families. They are trained and equipped to address military specific tax issues, such as [combat zone](#) tax benefits and the effect of the Earned Income Tax Credit guidelines.

NOTE TO EDITOR: Below are helpful resources on IRS.gov.

[Choose a tax preparer wisely](#) – helpful steps to consider

[E-file](#) - Everyone can e-file, and everyone can e-file Individual tax returns for free